# Transitivity of Discourse Functionality: Letters-to-the-Editor

**Rafi' Mahmood Hussein AL-Mahdawi**
**University of Anbar**
**College of Education for Humanities**
**rafeehussein@yahoo.com**

**Mithaq Khamees Khalaf AL-Marrar**
**University of Anbar**
**College of Education for Humanities**
**mith_kh@yahoo.com**

## Abstract

The study aims to investigate the discoursal value of functionality of transitivity of letters-to-the-editor. It sheds light on the function of transitivity and its variants in the act of communication. Letters-to-the-editor is a linguistic case in which the letter writer expresses a specific type of mode related to previous issue that needs to be well interpreted by the editor as well as the third reader. To convey the communicative value of transitivity utilised in letters-to-the-editor of *The Times*, the study adopts Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (henceforth SFG) to present a statistic of transitivity processes. The analysis requires Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) since letters-to-the-editor is one of newspaper genra. The study presents some conclusions which reflect the communicative value of transitivity of letters-to-the-editor. The discourse functions of transitivity processes realised in the selected samples of letters-to-the-editor are variant, depending on the ideological significance, social power and text type.

**المستخلص**

**تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في القيمة الخطابية لتوظيف متعدية الفعل في نصية رسائل إلى المحرر. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على وظيفة متعدية الفعل بصيغها المتنوعة في عملية التواصل. إن نصية رسائل إلى المحرر حالة لغوية يعبر فيها كاتب الرسالة عن نمط محدد من المضمون الدلالي لفكرة سابقة تتطلب تفسيراً محكماً للمحرر وللقارئ الثالث على حد سواء. ولإماطة اللثام عن القيمة التواصلية لمتعدية الفعل في نصية رسائل إلى المحرر في جريدة التايمز البريطانية، فقد تبنت الدراسة أنموذج هاليدي في النحو الوظيفي النظامي لتشكيل إحصائية بأنواع متعدية الفعل. وحيث إن نصية رسائل إلى المحرر هي نوع من نصوص الصحافة فقد تطلبت الدراسة تحليلاً خطابياً نقدياً. وقد توصلت الدراسة لجملة أستنتاجات توضح مرتسماً للقيمة التواصلية لمتعدية الفعل في نصية رسائل إلى المحرر. إن الوظائف الخطابية لمتعدية الفعل متنوعة في النماذج المختارة من نصية رسائل الى المحرر ووفقاً للفائدة الأيديولوجية والقوة الاجتماعية ولنوعية النص ذاته.**

## 1. Introduction

Transitivity describes the relationship between participants and the roles they play in the processes described in reporting an experience (John E. Ritchardson 54). It is concerned with the way in which the actions are represented and the kind of actions which appear in letters-to-the-editor. Transitivity, representing different types of process or experience, consists of process, participants, and circumstance. Process realised by a verbal group is classified into material, relational, mental, verbal, behavioural, and

existential processes. Participants are realised by nominal group and circumstance is realised by adverbials or prepositional phrases.

Transitivity functions to link grammar to the ideational metafunction related to the context. It ,as a major component in experiential function of the clause, deals with the transmission of ideas representing processes or experiences (M. A. K. Halliday, “1985”, 94). The functions of transitivity processes reflect the discoursal value of each process in letters-to-the-editor. The communicative value of letters-to-the-editor is conveyed by the discoursal values realised by different processes.

## 2. Transitivity in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Transitivity functions to link grammar to the metafunctions related to the context. It ,as a major component in experiential function of the clause, deals with the transmission of ideas representing processes or experiences (Halliday, “1985”, 94). The main concern, in the study of transitivity, is that there is a range of choices to be made and each one structure of letters-to-the-editor could have been produced differently according to a social or ideological significance (R. Fowler 65). For instance:

(1) Technology is changing the international economic order. (action process)

(2) The international economic order is in a state of change. (relational process)

Both of these choices carry a significant connoted meaning, but there is a social or ideological significance related to each.

Systemic functional theory is applied to a structure of much larger stretches of language. Text is composed of paragraphs structured consequently by sentences constituting textual patterns of discourse. The communicative function fulfilled by a text depends on the communicative competence of participants and the context to which a text is performed accordingly.

The three aspects of context are recognised respectively by three metafunctions. Halliday’s SFG studies the functional as situational organisation of language in the social context (Halliday, “1985”, 11). It is concerned with how speakers/writers produce utterances/texts to convey their intended meanings through the metafunctions that relate language to the outside world where participants and their social roles are. According to SFL, language has three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Halliday figures these metafunctions as the types of meaning embodied in human language to form the basis of the semantic organisation of all natural languages (“1985”, 53). Somehow the metafunctions are reflected in a system of meaning potentials including “subnetworks of Transitivity, Thing, and Quality” with specific set of semantic features for an utterance production (Farzaneh Haratyan 260).

These metafunctions are the manifestations in the linguistic system of two functions which identify all uses of language: ideational (understanding the environment), and interpersonal (acting on the others in it). Textual is the third metafunction related to the other two mentioned (Halliday “1994”, xiii). The ideational function expresses the experiential and the logical content of the text; whereas interpersonal function deals with the social and power relations among the users of language and relates participant’s situational roles to the discourse performed. Then, the textual function is language-oriented that deals with production of cohesive and coherent text by organising and structuring the linguistic information (Halliday and J. Martin 328). Haratyan states that metafunctions can be paralleled to grammatical categories of context of situation like:

1. Ideational Transitivity Field.
2. Interpersonal Mood Tenor.
3. Textual Theme Mode (261).

Saliently, the concern of this part of the study is on “Ideational Metafunction” since it is related to the system of transitivity.

### 2.1 Ideational Metafunction and Transitivity System

Halliday states that ideational metafunction is the representation of experience, and provides grammatical resources at clause level to construe internal and external experience or goings-on of the word (“1985”, 53). The construing is workable in the domain of functions and meanings of the world through the system of transitivity. This metafunction is divided into two functions: the logical and experiential. The logical function refers to the grammatical resources to build up grammatical structures into complexes, such as combining more than one clause into a complex clause. The experiential function refers to grammatical resources involved to construe the experience through the unit of the clause structure.

The ideational metafunction reflects the contextual value of field that is the social process in which the language is implied. The study of a text in terms of ideational metafunction involves dealing with the choices in the grammatical system of transitivity: process, participant, and circumstance types. These choices are realised as the main components of transitivity (ibid., 101).

Transitivity is developed traditionally depending on transitive or intransitive verb whether the verb requires an object or not, but in SFL it functions to connect grammar to the metafunctions. Transitivity is a major component in experiential function of the clause dealing with the “transmission of ideas” and representing process or experience such as actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations (ibid., 53). Haratyan states that transitivity is a semantic system to analyse representations of reality in a linguistic text and to produce the same experience through various lexico-grammatical choices (261). These

choices are influenced by different mind styles or ideology. It manifests how certain choices encode the writer's certain ideological state affected by social and cultural situation. It also functions as an analytic method utilised in CDA, dealing with who (what) does what to whom (what)? where actor, action and goal as affected are highlighted.

Transitivity, representing different types of process or experience, consists of process, participants, and circumstance. Process refers to a verb semantically such as doing, happening, feeling, sensing, saying, behaving, and existing. Process is classified into *material*, *relational*, *mental*, *verbal*, *behavioural*, and *existential processes*. Participants such as Actor–Goal, Senser–Phenomenon, and Carrier–Attribute. Circumstance includes cause, location, manner, means and instrument (Philip L. Graber 80-2). These linguistic processes are socially and culturally constructed with participants, any animate or inanimate noun phrase in circumstances expressed by adverbial and prepositional phrases (Halliday, "1985" 101-2).

Hence, The components of transitivity are variable by which the writer (editor, journalist, or letter writer) would be able to choose an appropriate structure that functions the purposeful end in editorial texts. Transitivity system allows the writer of letters-to-the-editor make discourse more understandable by its various components: process type, participant type, and circumstance type.

## 3. Letters-to-the-Editor

Letters-to-the-editor being one of editorial texts represents an example of written discourse but not the same as any other discourse genra since the "generic structure potential" identified by lexico-grammatical variation in letters-to-the-editor is different from other genra (Hossein Shokouhi and Forough Amin 390). Letters-to-the-editor reflects critical issues related to political, economic, and judicial power (Richardson 76-77). Angela Alameda-Hernandez discusses that media discourse is a powerful means in ideological construction and maintenance in contemporary society. It becomes useful in the study of issues of national identity and the formation of public opinion (164). Letters-to-the-editor is influenced by social and ideological contexts formed by the society and its culture that enable the writer what and how to write. The concern of letters-to-the-editor involves critical analysis that relates letters-to-the-editor to CDA.

Ten samples of letters-to-the-editor of *The Times*, as the corpus of this study, are selected to be analysed in relation to transitivity system. Wober argues that the letters' page of *The Times* is dominated by members of the social elites, i.e. "professors, officers of associations, and people in organisations" (qtd. in Richardson 153). Letters-to-the-editor, as a genre, is a powerful feature of newspaper discourse. The letters are short articles used for two purposes: to show agreement or disagreement with respect to previously published articles, and to explain brief information that does

need the detail of the original article (E. V. del Arbol 148). Richardson states that letters-to-the-editor is primarily argumentative and their significance is in (re)shaping public opinion but they are not representative of public opinion (150).

K. Wahl-Jorgensen suggests four criteria used by editors to select or reject readers' letters to be published (73). The first is the rule of relevance which prefers topics that have a legitimate place in the public debate. The second is the rule of entertainment. Notions of what is entertaining differ according to taste. All newspapers try to "turn on readers by offering more sparkly, entertaining op-ed pages and letters sections" (ibid., 74). This is the case when letters argue about disempowered, discriminated or otherwise harassed issues of the public. The rule of brevity, which is the third, prefers the succinct and punchy letters not lengthy deliberation. This means that discussion tends to fall within the bounds of "thinkable thought" (Richardson 153). Finally, the rule of authority which is displayed in two ways: as textual competence and as personal character. It is not enough for the letter writer to have something to say but the on-odds letter writer knows how to say it. Also what gives authority to letters is their writers even though personal authority alters between newspapers (Wahl-Jorgensen 77).

To sum up, letters-to-the-editor gives an ideational representation of thought/action, in terms of transitivity system. Transitivity system is well dealt with in Halliday's SFG which would be a workable model for this system.

## 4. Methodology

This study conveys the discoursal value of each process that reflects the communicative value of persuasion in letters-to-the-editor as transitivity processes are variant depending on social relations and ideological significance. Ten samples of letters-to-the-editor of *The Times* are selected for the sake of analysis adopting Halliday's model of analysis as being the most comprehensive treatment of the subject and a standard model in this area.

## 5. Analysis of the Selected Letters

## Analysis of Letter (1)

**Scottish independence**

Geographic realities mean that an independent Scotland would always be overshadowed by its neighbour. No land routes go anywhere without long (potentially toll-incurring) travel across the UK. It is too small and remote to run large merchant fleets, ports or major international airports.

**Larry Rushton, Maignaut Tauzia, France**

**(Friday January 13 2012, No 70468)**

The letter writer expresses his objection to an independent Scotland exposing some real or natural obstacles towards the independence of Scotland. Texting of letter (1) shows that four clauses are used to express the ideational representation. The first “Geographic realities mean that …” is presented as an *identifying-relational process of intensity,* the Process being “mean”, the Identified/Token “Geographic realities” and the Identifier/Value “that …”. In this clause, “that …” functions as Value of the Token “Geographic realities”, so it would identify the negative affect (function) of “Geographic realities” on overshadowing “an independent Scotland”. Such a relationship between the Token and Value can reach the letter writer’s aim of making the reason naturally accepted.

The clause “an independent Scotland would always be overshadowed by its neighbour” is a *material process*. The Process “would … be overshadowed” is indicated in passive voice, the stated Actor “its neighbour” is preceded by the thematized Goal “an independent Scotland”. The clause reports the happening completely, what happens and by whom as supporting evidence.

“No land routes go anywhere without long (potentially toll-incurring) travel across the UK.” is a *material process*. The Process is “go” and the Actor is “land routes”. This clause represents a metaphorical variant of transitivity since the Actor “land routes” is an abstract. The letter writer reports another reason to object the independence in order to reinforce his idea.

The last clause in this letter represents an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “is”, “it” is the Carrier which refers to “an independent Scotland”, and the Attribute is “too small and remote”, other demerits of Scotland. The Attribute “too small and remote” specifies the features which never make the Carrier “Scotland” be able to administrate its affairs.

## Analysis of Letter (2)

**High-speed rail line**

Sir, You say (leading article, Jan 11) that HS2 will be extended to the North East and Scotland. If Scotland is by then independent, how will its share of the total coast of the line from London be calculated?

**David Cockerham, Bearsted, Kent**

**(Saturday January 14 2012, No 70469)**

The letter writer argues calculating the coast of “HS2” line which will be extended to Scotland, in case of establishing Scotland as an independent state. Two material, one relational, and one verbal processes are indicated

in letter (2). The first clause “ You say that …” expresses the writer’s aim to argue what stated previously by the editor. The clause is a *verbal process* in which the process is “say”, the Sayer is “You” and “that …” is the Verbiage. This process reflects a communicative value of the discourse since the letter writer tries to make the editor remember something so that they can go ahead in their communication.

The verbiage of the previous clause “that HS2 will be extended …” is a *material process*. The process is “will be extended” which is in passive voice, the Goal is “HS2”, and the Actor is not stated in this clause. The thematization of the Goal reports the emphasis of the line “HS2” and the Process “extended” rather than the Actor (Agent).

“If …” clause is an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The process is “is”, the Carrier is “Scotland”, and the Attribute is “independent”. The Attribute “independent” gives a characteristic of “Scotland”.

The last clause “how will …” represents a logical sequencing to the previous “if …” clause. It is a *material process* in which the process is “will … be calculated” indicated in passive voice. The Actor is not stated in the clause and the Goal is “its share of the total coast of the line from London”. In this clause, the letter writer is wondering of the ability of calculating “its share …” in case of independence of Scotland.

## Analysis of Letter (3)

**Trial by jury**

Sir, There is a simple way to save money where a defendant elects jury trial on a minor offence. Cut the jury to seven, allowing a 6-1 majority verdict. Seven is a more practicable number for making decisions on committees. It is also considerably cheaper and worked during the Second World War.

**Philip Levy, London EC4**

**(Tuesday January 17 2012, No 70471)**

The letter writer exposes the merits of the committee “jury” which consists of seven members. He reinforces his viewpoint by an already experience “during the Second World War”. Letter (3) contains five clauses of the ideational function: two material clauses, two relational clauses, and one existential clause. The first clause “There is a simple way …” is an *existential process*. “There” has no representational function but it is used because of the need for a syntactic subject. The Process is “is” and the Extent, representing an entity, is “a simple way”. The Extent “a simple way” is presented as a means for a specific purpose “to save money”. The letter writer reports the phenomenon by an attractive way, which is an existential process, to persuade others accept his opinion.

The adverbial clause “where a defendant elects jury trail …”, functioning as adjunct relating to the previous, is a *material process*. The Process is “elects”, the Actor is “a defendant”, and the Goal is “jury trail”.

“Cut the jury to seven” represents a *material process* in which the Process is “cut”, the Actor is not stated in the clause because it is understood from the context of discourse that the Actor is supposed to be the editor who is asked to “cut”, and the Goal is “the jury”.

The clause “Seven is a more practicable number …” is an *identifying-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “is”, “Seven” is the Identified/Token, and the Identifier/Value is “a more practicable number”. The Identifier/Value “a more practicable number” identifies the features of “Seven” being as Identified/Token. In this clause, the letter writer elaborates the features of the phenomenon.

The last clause “It is also considerably cheaper and worked …” is an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “is”, the Carrier is “It” referring to “Seven”, and the Attribute is “cheaper and worked”. The Attribute “cheaper and worked” features the characteristics of the Carrier which represents “Seven” members of jury during an already experience. The letter writer’s reference to the circumstance of temporal “during the Second World War”, in transitivity system, develops the credibility of the writer to support his idea. This clause represents the second part of the textual pattern (phenomenon-example) used in this letter in order to support the letter writer’s viewpoint.

## Analysis of Letter (4)

**Communications breakdown**

Matthew Parris blames the lack of electronic communications from Costa Concordia passengers on their age. I was told by my mobile network supplier that on no account should I use the e-mail facility during my cruise as even if it was just switched on, never mind used, I would incur massive bills.

**James Crane, Fareham, Hants**

**(Friday January 20 2012, No 70474)**

The letter writer discloses his personal experience of the lack of electronic communications during a cruise to reinforce Matthew Parris’ viewpoint reported previously. There are three material clauses, one behavioural clause, and one verbal clause. The first clause “Matthew Parris blames the lack of electronic communications …” is a *verbal-behavioural process* since the act of blaming (behavioural) involves saying (verbal). The Process is “blames”, the Behaver is “Matthew Parris”, and the Receiver is “the lack of electronic communications”. The letter writer reports the textual pattern by elaborating the phenomenon “lack electronic communications”.

The clause “I was told by my mobile network supplier that …” is a *verbal process* in which the Process is “ was told” indicating in passive voice. The Sayer is “my mobile network supplier”, the Receiver is “I”, and “that …” is the Verbiage. The passive voice used here is to emphasise a letter writer’s personal experience which is related to the phenomenon.

The verbiage of the previous clause “that on no account should I use the e-mail facility …” is a *material* clause in which the Process is “should … use”. The Actor is “I” and the Goal is “the e-mail facility”. It represents the message needed to be transmitted by the letter writer to complete the first part of textual pattern.

The clause “if it was just switched on” is a *material process* presented in a passive voice. The Process is “was … switched”, the Actor is not stated, and the Goal is “it”. The thematization of the Goal and the ellipsis of the Actor would give an emphasis on the Goal “it” referring anaphorically to “e-mail facility” and the Process rather than the Actor.

The clause, functioning as a result to “if …” clause, “I would incur massive bills” is a *material process*. The Process is “would incur”, the Actor is “I”, and the Goal is “massive bills”. The second bit of the letter, from “ I was told …” to the end, shows the second (example) part of the textual pattern dominated in this letter.

## Analysis of Letter (5)

> Can I suggest that the best and most appropiate [sic] permanent home for David Hockney’s remarkable exhibition should be at Saltaire Mill in Shipley, near Bradford, where he already exhibits many of his works.
> **Linda Hartley, Ilkley, West Yorkshire**

**(Saturday January 28 2012, No 70481)**

The letter writer suggests an appropriate location to exhibit David Hockney’s works where he already exhibited his works. The ideational metafunction of letter (5) is expressed in three processes: material, relational, and behavioural. The first clause “Can I suggest that …” is a *verbal-behavioural process* in which the act of suggesting (behavioural) involves saying (verbal). The Process is “Can … suggest”, the Behaver is “I”, and “ that …” is the Verbiage. The letter writer’s request to perform a suggestion reflects one of the communicative value which is related to power relations.

The clause “the best and most appropiate [sic] permanent home for David Hockney’s remarkable exhibition should be at Saltaire Mill …” is an *identifying-relational process of circumstance*. The Process is “should be”, the Identified/Token is “Saltaire Mill …”, and the Identifier is “the best and most appropiate [sic] permanent home …”. The Identified and Identifier are related to each other by the feature of location. The Identifier/Value “the best and most appropriate home …” presents the features of the Identified/Token “Saltaire Mill …”.

The last clause, functioning as an adverbial, "where he already exhibits many of his works" is a *material process*. The Process is "exhibits", the Actor is "he" referring to "David Hockney", and the Goal is "many of his works". The letter writer reports the reason, which is the second part of the textual pattern (phenomenon-reason), for choosing such a location.

## Analysis of Letter (6)

> **The going rate**
> Sir, The UK has internationally sought-after scientists, surgeons and other top professionals who work here despite being paid a fraction of what some bankers are awarded. Are we really a society that values financial acumen more than anything else that contributes to the quality of our lives?
> **Peter Hare, Deal, Kent**

**(Wednesday February 1 2012, No 70484)**

The letter writer holds the view that UK society values what "contributes to the quality of … lives" more than "financial acumen". These values lead to the low going rate. The transitivity system is applied in letter (6) through six clauses of material, mental, and relational processes. The first clause "The UK has internationally sought-after scientists, surgeons and other top professionals" is an *attributive-relational process of possession*. The Process is "has", the Carrier is "The UK", and the Attribute is "internationally sought-after scientists, surgeons and other top professionals". The Attribute, which is the possessed, belongs to the Carrier, which is the possessor.

The relative clause "who work here …" is a *material process* in which the Process is "work" and the Actor is "who" referring to "scientists, surgeons and other top professionals".

The nominal clause "what some bankers are awarded" is also a *material process*. The Process is "are awarded", the Actor is not stated, the Goal is "what", and the Receiver is "some bankers". The clause is structured in the passive voice in which the thematized Goal is followed by the Receiver while the Actor is not stated. This structure shows an emphasis on the Goal rather than other participants.

The yes/no clause "Are we really a society" is an *identifying-relational process of intensity*. The Process is "Are", the Identified/Token is "we", and the Identifier/Value is "a society". The Identifier/Value "a society" identifies the features of Identified/Token "we".

The relative clause "that values financial acumen …" is a *mental process* in which the Process is "values" related to the cognition, the Senser is "that" referring to "a society", and the Phenomenon is "financial acumen".

The clause "that contributes to the quality of our lives", is also a relative clause, is a *material process*. The Process is "contributes to", the Actor is

"that" representing "anything else", and "the quality of our lives" is the Goal. According to the discoursal context, the last three clauses indicate the negation.

## Analysis of Letter (7)

**Dishonourable business**

Sir, If members of the Government, for example, offer awards of distinction to those who either have already been rewarded financially or who in the public mind do not deserve it, then the guilty party is the Government, not the recipient who may not be modest enough to decline it.

**John Preston, Croydon, Surrey**

**(Thursday February 2 2012, No 70485)**

The letter writer argues honouring the awards of distinction and identifying the guilty party when these awards are being presented to the wrong ones. The experiential metafunction is expressed in letter (7) through five clauses: one material process, three relational processes, and one behavioural process. The first clause "If members of the Government … offer awards of distinction to those …" is a *material-behavioural process* in which the Process is "offer", the Behaver is "members of the Government", the Goal is "awards of distinction", and the Beneficiary: Recipient is "those". The letter writer reports an assumption in which the behaviour (act) of offering involves doing something like preparing the awards and arranging the way by which these awards are rewarded.

The relative clause "who … have already been rewarded financially" is also a *material* which is presented in the passive voice. The Process is "have … been rewarded", the Actor is not mentioned, the Goal also is not stated but understood from the context to be "financially", the Receiver is "who" referring to "those".

The clause "who … do not deserve it" is an *identifying-relational process of possession*. The Process is "do not deserve", the Identified/Token is "who", and the Identifier/Value is "it" referring to the award. The Process indicates "ought not to have" (Halliday, "1985", 122). The Identifier/Value "it", possessed, identifies what does not belong to the Identified/Token "who".

The clause "the guilty party is the Government" is an *identifying-relational process of intensity*. In this clause, the Process is "is", the Identifier/Token is "the guilty party", and the Identified/Value is "the Government". The Identified is presented as Value because it is preceded by the Identifier which should be presented as Token. The Identifier "the guilty party" identifies the features of the Identified "the Government" which is "the guilty". The Value "the Government" specifies the identity of

the Token "the guilty party". This clause indicates the result to the assumption previously reported.

The last clause "who may not be modest enough …" is an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is "may not be", the Carrier is "who" referring to "the recipient", and the Attribute is "modest enough". The Attribute expresses what may not be the characteristic "modest enough" of the Carrier "who".

## Analysis of Letter (8)

**National Marriage Week**

Sir, empirical evidence shows that couples who marry are more likely to enjoy durable relationships than cohabiting couples. As headlines are dominated by the fallibility of our economies, surely marriage is the greatest investment that any of us can make?

**(Monday February 6 2012, No 70488)**

The letter writer presents an invitation of marriage and exposes evidently the enjoyment of married couples more than corrupted ones. Six clauses are used to express the experiential metafunction. The first "empirical evidence shows that …" is a *material process*. The Process is "shows", the Actor is "empirical evidence", and the Goal is "that …". The clause represents a metaphorical variant of transitivity because the Actor which provides the enjoyment of married couples is an abstract.

The goal of the previous clause "that couples … are more likely to enjoy" is an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is "are", the Carrier is "that couples", and the Attribute is "more likely …". The Carrier "that couples" is featured by the Attribute as "more likely to enjoy".

The appositive clause "who marry" is a *material process* in which the Process is "marry" and the Actor is "who" referring to "that couples". The Goal is not mentioned because the process "marry" is intransitive verb.

The clause "As headlines are dominated by the fallibility of our economies" is a *material process*. The clause is presented in the passive voice in which the Actor "the fallibility of our economies" is preceded by the Goal "headlines". The Process, which is "are dominated", expresses the domination of "the fallibility" of economies. The discoursal value of this clause is to match the marriage and economy. The marriage which everybody can do successfully and the economy which can be fallible.

The clause "… marriage is the greatest investment …" is an *identifying-relational process of intensity*. The Process is "is", the Identified/Token is "marriage", and the Identifier/Value is "the greatest investment". The Identifier/Value "the greatest investment" identifies the "marriage" as an "investment" because the letter writer uses the familiar terms in his society which reflects the social conditions.

The relative clause “that any of us can make” is a *material process* in which the Process is “can make”, the Actor is “any of us”, and the Goal is “that” referring to “the greatest investment” which is the “marriage”.

## Analysis of Letter (9)

**NHS ‘solutions’**

Sir, David Cameron stated before the last election that the last thing the NHS needed was a major top to bottom re-arrangement. Shame he has not heeded his own advice. I do not think the profession is against change per se, just change that is ill-conceived and not “road tested”.

**Professor David Isenberg,**
**University College London**

**(Thursday February 9 2012, No 70491)**

The letter writer argues the solutions, needed for NHS, which should be conceived and “road tested”. The ideational representation is indicated in six processes. The first “David Cameron stated … that …” is a *verbal-behavioural process*. The Process is “stated”, which shows the act of stating which involves saying, “David Cameron” is the Behaver, and “that…” is the Verbiage. This process reflects a communicative value of the discourse since the letter writer reports something stated previously. Consequently the communication can be performed correctly.

The verbiage of the previous is the message reported previously “that the last thing the NHS need was a major top to bottom re-arrangement” is an *identifying-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “was”, the Identified/Value is “the last thing …”, and the Identifier/Token is “a major top to bottom re-arrangement”. The Identifier “a major top to bottom re-arrangement” identifies the kind of “re-arrangement” for the Identified and the Identified/Value presents the quality of the Identifier/Token to be “the last thing”.

The clause “Shame he has not heeded his own advice” is a *mental-behavioural process* in which the Process is “has not heeded”, the Behaver is “he”, and the Phenomenon is “his own advice”. The Process expresses the act of heeding which involves the sense of ponder.

The clause “I do not think the profession is against change …” is a *mental process*. The Process is “do not think” related to the cognition, the Senser is “I”, and the Phenomenon is “the profession is against change …”. The clause shows inner experience of the letter writer which is stated here to persuade the others.

The phenomenon of the previous clause “the profession is against change …” is an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “is”, the Carrier is “the profession”, and the Attribute is “against change …”. The Attribute presents what is belonged to the Carrier. It reflects the negation of being “against change” which can be understood from the context of discourse.

The last clause “just change that is ill-conceived and not “road tested”” is also an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “is”, the Carrier is “ that” referring to “change”, and the Attribute is “ill-conceived and not “road tested””. The Attribute presents the features that belong to the Carrier. This clause shows the kinds of change which are refused by “the profession”.

## Analysis of Letter (10)

**Commonwealth?**

It is sad that no Commonwealth turns will perform at the Diamond Jubilee concert. The Queen is the head of more nations than just the UK; and it would have been appropriate to invite some of those countries’ stars – eg, Michael Buble from Canada – to appear rather than just a few British acts.

**Neil Jones, London SE24**

**(Friday February 10 2012, No 70492)**

The letter writer argues two required arrangements for performing Commonwealth turns which are the concert and the attendance of “countries’ stars”. Letter (10) indicates the experiential metafunction through four processes. The first clause “It is sad that …” represents an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “is”, the Carrier is “It” referring to a situation of performing “Commonwealth turns”, and the Attribute is “sad”. The Verbiage is “that …” which expresses the case or situation of what is “sad”. The Attribute shows the feature of the Carrier which is “sad”. The letter writer elaborates the relationship between performing Commonwealth turns and sadness to persuade others accept his opinion.

The verbiage of the previous clause “ that no Commonwealth turns will perform …” is a *material process*. The Process is “will perform”, the Actor is “Commonwealth turns”. The Process expresses the holding (happening) of “Commonwealth turns”. It is to report what happens sadly in relation to the preceding clause.

The clause “The Queen is the head of more nations …” is an *identifying-relational process of intensity* in which “is” is the Process, “The Queen” is the Identified/Token, and “the head of more nations …” is the Identifier/Value. The Identifier/Value identifies the representation and position of “The Queen” which is Identified/Token. The relationship elaborated between “the Queen” and the “nations” represents a way by which the letter writer’s viewpoint would be accepted naturally.

The last clause “it would have been appropriate …” is an *attributive-relational process of intensity*. The Process is “would have been”, the Carrier is “it” referring to a case or situation, and the Attribute is “appropriate …”. The Attribute presents the feature of appropriateness of the Carrier for a further purpose “to invite some of those …”. This clause

reflects the matching relationship between the two segments (bits) of the letter, what is sad and what is appropriate, in order to persuade the others.

The graphical representation below shows the recurrences of transitivity processes in figure (1) which are realised in the selected samples of letters-to-the-editor.

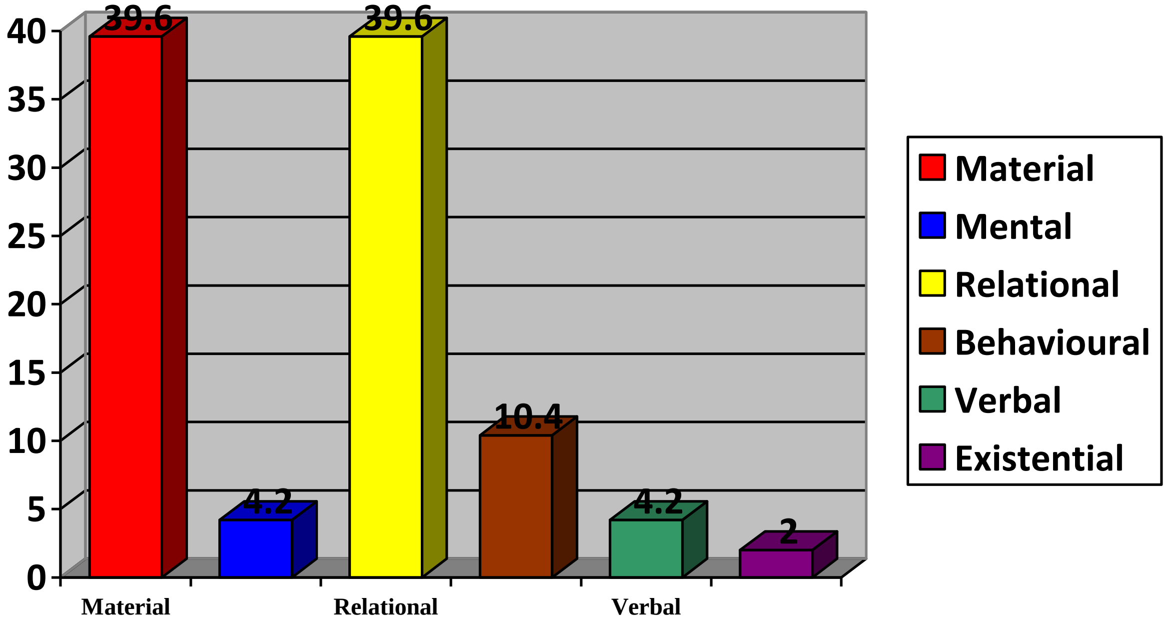



Figure (1) Graphical Representation of Transitivity Processes

## 6. Conclusions

In letters-to-the-editor, transitivity forms the very basis of representation which reflects the ideational function, *Material process* and *relational process* highly recur in letters-to-the-editor with an average of 39.6% for each shown in table (1) below. *Material process*, showing doing actions or happening events, motivates the reader physically and makes the text more active. *Relational process* is an effort to create a very positive image of letter writer's idea to arouse the reader's confidence.

*Mental process* and *verbal process* recur twice for each with a 4.2% average. *Mental process* representing inner experience is utilised to strike the emotional side of the reader and to show the letter writer's perception towards the discussed issue and it reflects one of the communicative values of persuasion, whereas *verbal process* reveals the letter writer's intention to get the reader's attention in order to present an idea which may be new to solve a problem or support an already discussed idea or previously stated to remind the reader.

*Behavioural process* conveys the experience which reflects the soft image of the letter wrier to persuade the reader as if the letter writer asks the reader to live or feel the situation. It recurs five times with an average

of 10.4%, whereas the letter writer's making an account more objective and accepted by providing something exists or happens is indicated by *existential process*, which reflects one of the communicative values of persuasion, that lowly recurs in the letters-to-the-editor with an average of 2% as identified in table (1).

Table (1) Recurrences and Percentage of Transitivity Processes in The Selected Samples of Letters-to-the-editor

| **Transitivity Processes** | **Material Process** | **Mental Process** | **Relational Process** | **Behavioural Process** | **Verbal Process** | **Existential Process** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recurrences in Letter 1** | **2** | **-** | **2** | **-** | **-** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 2** | **2** | **-** | **1** | **-** | **1** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 3** | **2** | **-** | **2** | **-** | **-** | **1** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 4** | **3** | **-** | **-** | **1** | **1** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 5** | **1** | **-** | **1** | **1** | **-** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 6** | **3** | **1** | **2** | **-** | **-** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 7** | **1** | **-** | **3** | **1** | **-** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 8** | **4** | **-** | **2** | **-** | **-** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 9** | **-** | **1** | **3** | **2** | **-** | **-** |
| **Recurrences in Letter 10** | **1** | **-** | **3** | **-** | **-** | **-** |
| **Total Recurrences** | **19** | **2** | **19** | **5** | **2** | **1** |
| **Percentage** | **39.6%** | **4.2%** | **39.6%** | **10.4%** | **4.2%** | **2%** |

Finally, The present study is significant to the EFL and ESL learners as being concerned with language in use. It sheds light on the notionality and functionality of written phase of language. As such, learners would meet a number of different typical discoursal problems of writing: an absent addressee, detachment from the relevant physical environment as a shared context for writer and reader and the resultant need to be explicit, and the choice of how to stage the text.

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